

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 6, 2020

The Honorable Ron DeSantis  
Governor  
Office of Governor Ron DeSantis  
400 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Mary C. Mayhew  
Secretary  
Florida Agency for Health Care Administration  
2727 Mahan Drive  
Tallahassee, FL 32308

Dear Governor DeSantis and Secretary Mayhew:

We write out of deep concern for the rising number of Florida nursing home residents testing positive for COVID-19. According to the Centers for Disease Control, older adults are at higher risk for severe illness if they contract the virus. We have already seen nursing homes across the country bear the brunt of this pandemic and we must act decisively to protect our senior population. [More than 400](#) assisted living facilities across 27 states have reported at least one resident who has tested positive for COVID-19 and so far, [40 people](#) associated with the Life Care Center of Kirkland, Washington, which was the epicenter of the outbreak in the United States, have died of the virus.

Florida has 691 licensed nursing homes that house roughly 71,000 residents. This puts our state at severely heightened risk, and our assisted living facilities must take all proper precautions to avoid further tragedy.

Unfortunately, there have been reports of the viruses spread among Florida nursing homes. According to the Florida Department of Health, [143 Floridians](#) living in a skilled nursing or assisted living facility have tested positive for COVID-19 as of Friday, April 3. Furthermore, local news outlets have reported that seven residents of the Atria Willow Wood assisted living facility in South Florida [have died](#) after contracting the virus.

We urge you to work with nursing home administrators throughout the state to ensure that each facility develops a comprehensive COVID-19 response plan, as recommended by the CDC, including plans for

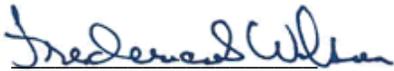
- the rapid identification and management of ill residents;
- maintaining a stock of necessary supplies and resources;
- implementing policies for sick leave and other occupational health considerations;
- educating and training staff about how to safely carry out their duties;
- properly screening staff for symptoms;
- ensuring surge capacity for staffing, equipment and supplies; and
- postmortem care.

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We also urge you to ensure that administrators follow CDC's [checklist](#) of recommendations to maintain safe facilities and to provide timely information to the public about specifically which facilities throughout the state have reported cases and how many residents have tested positive at each facility. Please also share what further actions you plan to take to protect nursing home residents.

We are the guardians of our seniors; it's up to all of us to safeguard those who face the greatest risk of infection. We are ready and willing to assist with these efforts.

Sincerely,



Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress

Charlie Crist  
Member of Congress

Val B. Demings  
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress

Al Lawson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Debbie Mucarsel-Powell  
Member of Congress

Stephanie Murphy  
Member of Congress

Donna Shalala  
Member of Congress

Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress